

Message Text

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USSALTTWO, MOSCOW FOR AMB PAUL C. WARNKE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PARM, SOPN

SUBJECT: JUNE 23 PRESS ROUNDUP

1. ROBERT G. KAISER IN WASHINGTON POST REPORTED "CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAS NOTIFIED CONGRESS IN SECRET THAT IT INTENDS TO SELL IRAN SEVEN HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED AIRBORNE RADAR SYSTEMS FOR 1.2 BILLION DOLLARS. THIS DECISION -- WHICH WILL BE MADE FORMAL AND PUBLIC JULY 6 -- IS EXPECTED TO PROVOKE FIRST PUBLIC DEBATE OVER AMERICAN ARMS SALES TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES SINCE PRESIDENT CARTER ANNOUNCED NEW POLICY INTENDED TO REDUCE THOSE SALES. SEVERAL ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS SAID YESTERDAY (JUNE 22) THAT 1.2 BILLION DOLLAR SALE TO IRAN VIOLATES THAT NEW POLICY, BUT OTHERS DISAGREED." KAISER QUOTED SENATOR THOMAS EAGLETON, "LONG-TIME OPPONENT OF THIS RADAR SYSTEM," AS CALLING PROPOSED SALE "OUTLANDISHLY INCREDIBLE," AND SENATOR JOHN CULVEV AS UNCLASSIFIED

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SAYING IT WAS "BASICALLY CONTRADICTORY TO CARTER'S ARMS SALES POLICY." KAISER SAID PROPONENTS REPLY THAT IRAN HAS NO RELIABLE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM AND IT IS IN AMERICA'S INTEREST TO SELL ONE TO SHAH. BECAUSE SYSTEM PRIMARILY IS DEFENSIVE, PROPONENTS SAY IT SHOULD NOT ESCALATE ARMS RACE IN REGION. KAISER SAID "ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS ALSO CONTEND THAT RADAR SYSTEM -- KNOWN FORMALLY AS AIR-

BORNE WARNING AND CONTROL SYSTEM (AWACS) -- IS LESS LETHAL THAN MANY OF AMERICAN WEAPONS SYSTEMS SHAH WOULD LIKE TO BUY." KAISER SAID CONGRESSIONAL CRITICS ASK WHETHER IRAN CAN BE TRUSTED WITH AWACS' SECRETS ("EVEN ITS OPERATING MANUALS ARE HIGHLY CLASSIFIED IN U.S. AIR FORCE") AND WHETHER U.S. WANTS TO SELL IRAN SYSTEM THAT WOULD ADMITTEDLY HAVE TO BE MANNED BY AMERICAN TECHNICIANS FOR YEARS TO COME. "EACH CRAFT IS INTENDED TO CARRY CREW OF 26, ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, AND MOST OF THESE WOULD BE AMERICAN UNTIL IRAN'S ALREADY-STRAINED SKILLED MANPOWER POOL COULD BE DRAWN ON TO PROVIDE NATIVE REPLACEMENTS," KAISER SAID.

2. WASHINGTON POST'S WALTER PINCUS REPORTED THAT SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE APPROVED PRODUCTION FUNDS FOR PENTAGON'S PROPOSED NEUTRON "KILLER" WARHEAD, BUT ONLY AFTER AMENDMENT SPONSORED BY SENATOR MARK HATFIELD TO DELETE MONEY FAILED ON 10 TO 10 TIE. COMMITTEE ALSO APPROVED 150 MILLION DOLLARS TO CONTINUE WORK ON CLINCH RIVER BREEDER REACTOR, EXPERIMENTAL PLUTONIUM BURNING NUCLEAR POWER PLANT THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAS CALLED ON CONGRESS TO HALT. COMMITTEE, AT REQUEST OF CHAIRMAN JOHN STENNIS, WENT INTO CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS NEUTRON WARHEAD, FIRST TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPON DESIGNED EXPRESSLY TO KILL PEOPLE RATHER THAN PRODUCE GENERAL DEVASTATION, PINCUS REPORTED.

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3. MURREY MARDER OF WASHINGTON POST SAID PRESIDENT CARTER AND AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER MALCOLM FRAZER AGREED ON CURRENT GOAL OF SEEKING FREEZE OR "BALANCE" OF AMERICAN AND SOVIET MILITARY FORCES IN INDIAN OCEAN. "COMMENTS BY PRESIDENT AND VISITING AUSTRALIAN LEADER SHOWED THAT U.S. OBJECTIVES HAVE BEEN DOWNGRADED IN AMERICAN-SOVIET TALKS ON INDIAN OCEAN, WHICH BEGAN IN MOSCOW YESTERDAY (JUNE 22)," MARDER SAID. "INITIAL CARTER TARGET WAS 'COMPLETE DEMILITARIZATION' OF INDIAN OCEAN." MARDER SAID "REDUCED AMERICAN GOAL IN MOSCOW TALKS WAS ALSO CONFIRMED INDIRECTLY BY PAUL C. WARNKE, CHIEF U.S. NEGOTIATOR IN TALKS. AS THEY BEGIN, WARNKE SAID THERE IS NO SUBSTANTIAL MILITARY COMPETITION IN INDIAN OCEAN. 'WE WOULD LIKE TO KEEP IT THAT WAY,' HE ADDED." AFTER HIS TALKS WITH FRASER, MARDER CONTINUED, PRESIDENT TOLD NEWSMEN THAT IN CURRENT MOSCOW TALKS ON INDIAN OCEAN, U.S. SEEKS AGREEMENT TO "STABILIZE STATUS QUO AND REFRAIN FROM FURTHER (MILITARY)ESCALATION." MARDER QUOTED CARTER AS SAYING THIS POSITION IS "STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY AUSTRALIA."

4. VERNON A. GULDRY, JR., WRITING IN JUNE 22 WASHINGTON

STAR, REPORTED THAT "U.S. AIR FORCE SAYS IT WAS NOT FIT OF INSTITUTIONAL PIQUE THAT LED IT TO REJECT BRITISH AIR-TO-AIR MISSILE CALLED SKYFLASH, IT WAS MERITS OF WEAPON." BUT REP. THOMAS DOWNEY SUGGESTED DURING JUNE 21 HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE HEARING ON TACTICAL AIRCRAFT THAT BRITISH DECISION NOT TO BUY EXPENSIVE U.S. FLYING COMPUTER AND RADAR SYSTEM CALLED AWACS (FOR AIRBORNE WARNING AND CONTROL SYSTEM) DOOMED SKYFLASH PURCHASE, GULDREY ADDED. "AND IN COURSE OF COLLOQUY ON AWACS, TOP U.S. AIR-WAR PLANNER DECLINED TO DEFEND AWACS AS SYSTEM NECESSARY TO FIGHT KIND OF WAR ANTICIPATED IN EUROPE."

5. GEORGE C. WILSON OF WASHINGTON POST SAID PENTAGON ESTIMATE WITHHELD FROM PUBLIC IN LAST DAYS OF FORD
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ADMINISTRATION PUT COST OF B-1 BOMBER AT 112 MILLION DOLLARS EACH, INSTEAD OF ADVERTISED FIGURE OF 93 MILLION DOLLARS, ACCORDING TO GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE (GAO) ANALYSIS RELEASED JUNE 22. SENATOR JOHN CULVER, WHO RELEASED GAO SUMMARY, SAID OTHER DATA HE HAS RECEIVED ACTUALLY PUSHES PRICE OF BOMBER UP TO 117 MILLION DOLLARS. PRESIDENT CARTER WILL ANNOUNCE SOON WHETHER TO PUT B-1 INTO FULL PRODUCTION. CARTER, IF HE DOES KEEP B-1 IN PRODUCTION, HOWEVER, IS EXPECTED TO RECOMMEND BUILDING FEWER THAN 244 PLANES AIR FORCE WANTS, WILSON SAID. "PENTAGON SOURCES PREDICT THERE WILL BE MIXTURE OF B-1 AND OLDER B-52 BOMBERS UNTIL CARTER ASSESSES PROSPECTS FOR REACHING STRATEGIC ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENT WITH SOVIETS," WILSON ADDED.

4. WASHINGTON POST PUBLISHED REUTER DISPATCH QUOTING NAVY AS SAYING ABORTED JUNE 20 TEST FLIGHT OF TOMAHAWK CRUISE MISSILE WAS CAUSED BY TAIL FIN THAT FAILED TO DEPLOY. NAVY SAID TOMAHAWK WAS SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHED FROM SUBMARINE TORPEDO UNDER OCEAN BUT BECAME UNSTABLE AFTER IT EMERGED FROM WATER AND BEGAN ITS GUIDED FLIGHT. MISSILE'S FOUR TAIL FINS PROVIDE DIRECTION CONTROL IN FLIGHT. NAVY SAID CAUSE OF MALFUNCTION IS BEING CORRECTED. CHRISTOPHER

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